

3) Do You Want To Be Great? Serve Others!

- A) As if to emphasize the extraordinary humility which Christ was exemplifying to His disciples (and us), Judas Iscariot is mentioned a few times (13:10, 11, 18) as being one who is not clean and is amongst those who are not chosen by Jesus Christ.
- B) While the passage certainly has salvation (chosen vs. not chosen) implications (particularly if you were Judas Iscariot), the passage is clearly about servanthood (13:14-16).
- C) Imagine the scene again! Jesus is adopting the most lowly task possible by washing His disciples feet. He washes their feet after supper had already begun (13:4), to emphasize what He was doing. He washed the feet of the man who would betray him (Judas Iscariot) and with abundant patience and humility he washed the feet of the man who would betray him three times later that night (Simon Peter).
- D) Drilling the point home with His disciples, Christ recognizes His authority over them (Teacher and Lord -- 13:13, master to slave -- 13:16) and calls on them to "do as I did to you" (13:14-15).
- E) Christ's teaching on the issue concludes with a recognition that the disciples "know these things" but will "be blessed if you do them" (13:17). This is one of only two "beatitudes" (you are blessed if you do this...) in John's gospel (also 20:29).

Servanthood

LONG BEACH ALLIANCE CHURCH MARCH 6, 2005 PASTOR CHRISTIAN KFORN



AND THERE AROSE ALSO A DISPUTE AMONG THEM AS TO WHICH ONE OF THEM WAS REGARDED TO BE GREATEST. AND HE SAID TO THEM, "...IT IS NOT THIS WAY WITH YOU, BUT THE ONE WHO IS THE GREATEST AMONG YOU MUST BECOME LIKE THE YOUNGEST, AND THE LEADER LIKE THE SERVANT. "FOR WHO IS GREATER, THE ONE WHO RECLINES AT THE TABLE OR THE ONE WHO SERVES? IS IT NOT THE ONE WHO RECLINES AT THE TABLE? BUT I AM AMONG YOU AS THE ONE WHO SERVES.

~LUKE 22:24 & 26-27 (NASB)

1) The Quiet Before The Storm

- A) John 13:1 serves as a capstone for the account of the Lord's Supper, which continues through the end of John 17. The section is marked by the love of Christ for "His own" (John 13:1, 3), those chosen out of the world who He shows (to the end) the full extent of His love.
- B) Judas Iscariot, previously introduced as Christ's betrayer (John 6:71) and as a thief (John 12:6), comes into sharper view in John 13 as being so given to betrayal, that Satan himself influences Judas (13:2) and will soon possess him (13:27).
- C) It was in the midst of the Last Supper that the disciples were arguing about who would be the greatest amongst themselves (Luke 22:24). In dramatic fashion Jesus "gets up," "lays aside His garments," "takes a towel," "girds Himself," "pours water," and "began to wash" (13:4-5)*.

*Doubtless, the disciples would have been happy to wash Jesus' feet, but they could not conceive of washing one another's feet, since this was a task normally reserved for the lowliest of menial servants. Peers did not wash one another's feet, except very rarely and as a mark of great love. Some Jews insisted that Jewish slaves should not be required to wash the feet of others; this job should be reserved for Gentile slaves, or for women and children and pupils (*Mekhilta* § 1 on Exodus 21:2). In one well-known story, when Rabbi Ishmael returned home from synagogue one day and his mother wished to wash his feet, he refused on the ground that the task was too demeaning. She took the matter to the rabbinic court on the ground that she viewed the task, in his case, as an honour (cf. Strack & Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* 1. 707). The reluctance of Jesus' disciples to volunteer for such a task is, to say the least, culturally understandable; their shock at Christ's volunteering is not merely the result of being shamefaced, it is their response to finding their sense of the fitness of things shattered (there is no other instance in either Jewish or Greco-Roman sources of a superior washing the feet of an inferior). But here, Jesus reverses normal roles. His act of humility is as unnecessary as it is stunning, and is simultaneously a display of love (13:1), a symbol of saving cleansing (vv. 6-9), and a model of Christian conduct (vv. 12-17). D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According To John*, pgs. 462-463.

2) Clean Heart First - Clean Feet Constantly

- A) One by one, Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. Their response is simply stunned silence, except for Simon Peter (13:5-6).
- B) Peter strongly objects to Christ washing his feet (13:6). Jesus counters Peter's objection with an assurance that it will all make sense later (13:7). Peter, even more vehemently than before, objects to Jesus washing his feet (13:8).
- C) Jesus, while literally speaking about washing Peter's feet, points all men everywhere to a washing free from sin that only Christ can give. Without this washing, Peter cannot belong to Christ (13:8).
- D) Peter, in characteristic fashion, wholeheartedly renounces his previous statement with a new radical statement. His answer, like the one before, is a product of his own self-will, and misses Jesus' purpose (13:9).
- E) It is receiving Jesus on Jesus' terms, accepting His lowly service on Peter's (and our) behalf, receiving the cleansing of the whole person which only He can provide which Jesus has in mind (13:10).
- F) Jesus is both concerned with the eternal soul of the person (he who has bathed), but also with the ongoing servanthood character of the person (foot washing) which distinguishes a Christian (13:10).

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Some people take the command of John 13:14 literally and wash each other's feet on a regular basis, particularly on Maundy Thursday ('Maundy' come from *mandatum* -- the Latin word for "commandment," which came from the key words in the Latin Vulgate translation of John 13:14-15). Is the command of Christ to be taken like a sacrament (we follow the exact example literally)?
- B) If the command is to be taken literally, does it stop there? If it is not literal, how do you live out the example of Christ to serve others? Don't give the quick church answer, rather, discuss in your group how we contextualize Christ's command for our 21st century world.
- C) Jesus Christ washed ALL of His disciple's feet, including His two betrayers, Simon Peter and Judas Iscariot. While we can get distracted by the dazzling humility this represents, how do Christ's actions translate into our lives? What are the implications for us in living out Christ's call to "do as I did to you" (John 13:15)?
- D) Simon Peter has a characteristically strong reaction to Christ's attempts to wash his feet (John 13:8-9). As I was studying, it struck me that I am not a whole lot different than Peter when it comes to responding to what Christ is doing in the lives of those around me, and in my own life. Do you find that you are like Simon Peter, too? Do you try to control, rather than relinquish, the direction Jesus is taking you (or others)?
- E) When it comes to serving others, especially those who we would consider capable of betrayal, there are no easy roads or methods to follow. Simply, we need support and prayer. Take some time to share with your group who God has burdened you to serve, and how God is asking you to serve them. Take some time to share honestly with one another, pray together, and be sure to note each other's prayer requests for future accountability and praise reports!

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